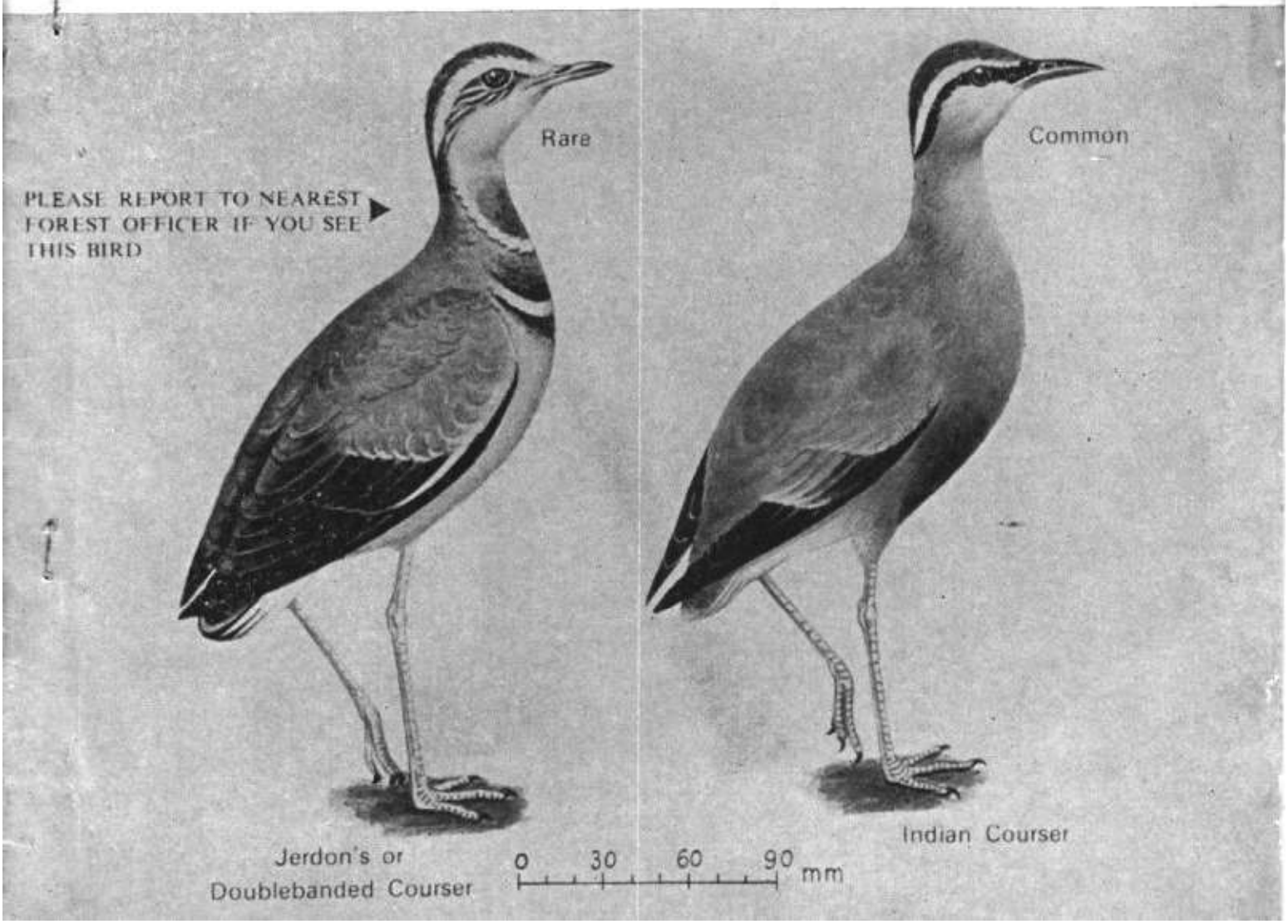
Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXII NO. 5 & 6 MAY - JUNE 1982


Rare
PLEASE REPORT TO NEAREST FOREST OFFICER IF YOU SEE THIS BIRD
Common
Jerdon's or Doublebanded Courser
0 30 60 90 mm
Indian Courser

N E W S L E T T E R
F O R B I R D W A T C H E R S

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wary, ascending the trees as we approached closer. I next saw them on 15.2.1981 at the scrub jungle adjoining the Nellapattu Pelicanry, Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh, some 100 kms. north of Madras. The flock numbered about 70-80 birds, flying from one bush to another alongwith Common Mynas. These also seemed to be very shy and wary. On both the occasions I found that the rose colour was much paler than illustrated. These two sightings make me wonder if the rosy pastors migrate along the S.E. coast on their way to Sri Lanka.

Anting by Common Swallows: Usually one observes the swallows (Hirundo rustica) flying about swiftly in the air or perched on wires. Rarely does one sees it descending on to the ground. But surprisingly I have had ample opportunities to see, on a number of instances, this bird on the ground at the open meadow at the Adyar Estuary. At times I have noticed upto about 50-60 birds on the ground and on the low calotropis bushes.

I was a bit surprised when I had seen them on the ground and thought probably they were down in quest of food. But quite lately I had observed them closely and noted that the birds on the ground had ruffled plumage and appeared to be preening their feathers. On closely examining the patches frequented by the birds, I found a number of small beackish brown ants. In all probabilities these birds were anting.

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Bird watching at Veltur Tank by S.Ashok Kumar, Indian Administrative Service, H.No.10-3-283/5, Humayun Nagar, Hyderabad 500028: While motoring along the National Highway No. 7 on 2nd September, I spotted a small tank abutting the road at 122 K.M. stone. Parking my car on the roadside, I walked to the road margin and surveyed the tank. In the midst of the tank bed and at a safe distance from the Highway and the bund are about 30 Acacia Arabica trees. The tank is brimming with water because of freshes due to recent monsoon rains. The Acacia trees, thus insulated from human and animal interference, afford an ideal habitat for nesting and breeding. I found a mixed heronry co-existing with an extensive colony of vociferous Baya birds. The heronry consists of Grey Herons (Ardea cinerea), Little Egrets (Egretta garzetta), Cattle Egrets (Bubulcus ibis), Cormorants (Phalacrocorax niger), Pond Herons

(Ardeola grayii) and Ibis (Threskiornis melanocephala). While the Egrets are roosting in 11 trees the Bayas have chosen two trees for their colony. It was almost dusk and against the backdrop of steel grey sky, I could not identify whether the Ibis are white or black. So I resolved to visit the tank again, armed with the binoculars.

On 19th September I revisited the tank. The cowherd informed me that the tank goes by the name of Komati Kunta of Veltur village. As the Herons, Egrets and Ibis had not yet returned to their roosting place, I went over the tank bund to observe the Baya nests. I focussed my binoculars on the colony of nests suspended from the overhanging branches and found it to be that of the Blackbreasted Weaver bird (Ploceus benghalensis). The male bird with its beautiful coat of breeding plumage - brilliant golden crown, white throat and a black band below - looked exceedingly handsome. It was fascinating to watch the male bird flying from one nest to another and calling on the lady birds and finally making a dash to the unfinished green nest to complete it for another mate. The din of the Bayas was occasionally pierced by the croaking of few egrets incubating in the nests. I followed the thick tree branch with my binoculars and found a snake with brown and white bands lying in wait for its prey. I witnessed two Egrets taking charge of incubating duties and relieving the other birds for foraging.

My digital blinked 5.45 pm., when I sighted flocks of Egrets winging their way from th eastern paddy fields to their roosting place. After circling over the tank twice or thrice, they landed on the tree branches and soon indulged in vocalisation. I counted 29 Little Cormorants, 4 White Ibis and number of Cattle Egrets, Little Egrets, Grey Herons and Pond Herons. That the Little Egrets are breeding is evidenced by the long drooping crest of two narrow plumes. These plumes were strikingly beautiful whenever the bird moved its head. The Cattle Egrets were also in breeding plumes -orange-buff head, neck and back. On the farthest tree I sighted a lone Common Kingfisher (Alcedo athis), my attention was drawn to the flight of two birds which landed on the lower branch of the nearest tree. Focussing my binoculars, I identified them as Pied Crested Cuckoo (Clamator jacobinus). The white tips of tail feathers and round patches on wings conspicuous during their flight were unmistakable. The din of the ubiquitous Common Mynas (Acridotheres tristis) drowned the crackle of the Egrets. The White Ibis silhouetted against the grey sky provided a magnificent view.

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